

SERVICE TO THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED



VISIONS NEWSLETTER WINTER 2016

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Director's Comments by Gaye Mattke

Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has had an impact on priorities in SBVI. Since the last VISIONS we have had the opportunity to meet regularly with managers from the Department of Labor and Regulation to develop the South Dakota WIOA Unified State Plan. Public forums were held in January to seek input on goals and strategies and to discuss new priorities and mandates through WIOA. See more on the Unified State Plan in this edition of VISIONS.

With spring just around the corner, we're working with the National Federation of the Blind to plan a public forum in conjunction with their convention in Rapid City on April 29th. This will provide an opportunity to touch base with old friends while sharing information and getting input on how to improve service delivery.

In an ongoing effort to improve outreach, we are developing a new brochure to address transition services for youth with vision loss. We're also working with Media One to develop a banner stand with a focus on transition services. Our goal is to "unveil" the new products at the Special Education Annual Conference in May.

The 91st South Dakota Legislative Session is underway. The Department of Human Services had their joint appropriations budget hearing on January 25th. The Division of SBVI is not requesting a budget expansion due to the ability to serve all citizens with vision loss who are eligible for services with our current budget. To learn more about bills and information on the legislative session go to:

http://legis.sd.gov/Legislative_Session/Default.aspx?Session=Ninety-First

Sponsorships and Stipends from the Board of SBVI

The Board of SBVI will support activities that promote vocational rehabilitation and employment of citizens with vision loss. Requests for sponsorships must be submitted in the prescribed format for approval by the Board of SBVI at their quarterly meetings. No food will be covered through the sponsorship of events by the Board. Sponsorships may be awarded to agencies, non-profits or other disability related organizations who may apply for assistance from the Board of SBVI. Priority for sponsorships will be for the following activities:

- Training related to employment of citizens with disabilities or other topics pertinent to vocational rehabilitation.
- Outreach and education to the public, employers and/or other entities regarding employment of citizens who are blind or visually impaired.
- Other activities deemed appropriate by the Board of SBVI.

The Board of SBVI will also support individuals who are blind or visually impaired to attend the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota or the South Dakota Association of the Blind conventions with stipends of up to \$350.00 per convention to be used by one individual or split between several participants. Priority for stipends will be for those attending conventions for the first time but may be made available to others if there is not a need for first time attendees to receive stipends. A report of the experiences of the person receiving the stipend is required after the convention. This report should include a summary of the person's experiences including how participation benefitted them and suggestions for future events. This report may come from the individual or a representative of the organization that sponsored the event. Failure to provide a report may result in denial of stipends for future events. To request a form for Board of SBVI sponsorship of an event or stipends, please contact the SBVI state office.

SBVI Staff Updates

April Schulte started her employment with Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired on January 4, 2016. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Southwest Minnesota State University, located in Marshall, Minnesota. Prior to moving to Sioux Falls, April worked at Habilitative Services Incorporated in Marshall Minnesota while attending college and also worked for the South Dakota Developmental Center in Redfield during summers, weekends and college breaks. Both of these employment opportunities as a direct support professional provided her with a strong knowledge base of disabilities and the challenges that some people may face.

April played multiple sports in high school, and still tries to stay active when she can. Family is very important to April and she loves spending time with family, friends and also loves outdoor activities like fishing and hunting with her Dad.

Cherie Gerry accepted the Rehabilitation Counselor position at SDRC. Her experience as a field rehabilitation counselor with SBVI will be a great asset to the Center; her first day was November 24th.

Rehabilitation Center for the Blind News

The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind continues to offer assistive technology classes on the first Friday of each month. The “First Friday” sessions occur in two parts, with a walk-in clinic held in the morning to help answer individual questions, followed by a three hour afternoon class offering training on specific assistive technology topics. The most popular topic thus far has been how to set-up and use the Voiceover features on iPhone and iPad. Watch for the monthly flyer in your email, which will include the topic of training and the date and time. In addition to the Friday classes, JoMarie Laughlin, Assistive Technology Instructor, assists people through phone calls, email, Facetime, or Skype during the week.

Save the Date! Transition Week at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind will be held June 26-30, 2016. Transition Week is a yearly event at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. Students get the opportunity to experience college life by staying in the dorms at Augustana University, explore a variety of work opportunities at local businesses, gain experience with gadgetry and low vision devices, and have fun on new adventures with friends! For more information please contact: Steve Kelsey at 605-626-2333 or steve.kelsey@sdsbvi.northern.edu, your SBVI Rehabilitation Counselor, or the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind at 800-658-5441.

Lori Kwasniewski, Program Specialist, attended two day training for Person Centered (PC) Transition Assessment. The PC Transition Assessment is a process to ensure self-advocacy and determine students’ interests, abilities and leads to achievable postsecondary goals. Participants of the training practiced Person Centered Thinking skills, facilitation skills and rubric to evaluate modeled assessments.

Unified State Plan

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), signed into law on July 22, 2014, is the first legislative reform of the public workforce system in 15 years. WIOA presents an opportunity to improve job and career options for jobseekers through an integrated, job-driven public workforce system that links diverse talent to businesses. Under WIOA, Vocational Rehabilitation agencies (both DRS and SBVI) will be working closely with the Department of Labor and Regulation to develop and implement a four-year strategy in the form of a single Unified State Plan. The four core programs included in the Unified State Plan are the Adult, Dislocated Worker Program and Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program (services to job seekers and businesses), Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

A global vision statement and goals have been drafted to address priorities of all partners in the unified planning process. The Unified State Plan describes how the delivery of each of the four core programs will be aligned to be consistent with the overall vision, goals, and strategies. Each program will have strategies that specifically address the target group for their services.

The Departments of Human Services and Labor and Regulation held public forums on January 21, 2016, in Pierre and on January 27th, a public meeting was held via Dakota

Digital Network (DDN) videoconference with eight sites available statewide, participants also had the option to join the meetings via conference call. Both meetings addressed strategic planning and priorities for each of the core partners under WIOA. Discussions focused on comments and questions related to statewide services available for citizens seeking employment. Public comments are being accepted through February 12, 2016. Comments may be submitted in writing through the web link below. The deadline for submission of the unified state plan was recently revised to April 1, 2016 (originally the deadline was March 3rd). A draft of the Unified State Plan is available online at: http://dev.dol.sd.gov/workforce_training/documents/wioa_sd_unified_state_plan.pdf

Sioux Falls White Cane March

The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired helped sponsor the White Cane March, which was held October 10, in downtown Sioux Falls. The event was held to bring awareness to the White Cane Law. In addition to the march, Rehabilitation Center staff Bob Smith and Mary Carrell also spoke about car and pedestrian safety. Prior to the event, Bob Smith assisted in creating a video demonstrating how drivers should best approach an intersection with a pedestrian carrying a white cane. The video was produced by Sioux Falls cable channel 16, CityLink. The video will be shown at the Sioux Falls Department of Motor Vehicles license offices.

Peer Support Leaders Make a Difference

Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has a small network of Peer Support Groups in communities across the state. Some groups are led by volunteer leaders who are interested in assisting the members through low vision education and activities. The overall intent is for the members to remain involved with others who are facing challenging lifestyle changes due to their eye disease. SBVI is going to share information about the groups and volunteer leaders in the VISIONS Newsletters. If you are interested in starting a Peer Support Group in your community, please call 1-800-265-9684 for more information.

Volunteer Leader: Shirley English, Pierre, SD

How long have you been involved with Peer Support: Off and on for nearly 6 years, at various locations in Pierre. I've been a volunteer leader for the peer support group in my apartment building for 7 months.

What made you decide to get involved with Peer Support? I know it's important to talk with others about anything you face that is a challenge including vision loss. There was a person who resided in the apartment building who was very outgoing but she had vision and hearing loss. The other ladies all talked about her and said; she doesn't belong here. This was upsetting. When I heard them talking about the person, I said "when you folks decide I don't belong here; I hope you have the courtesy to tell me". They said this about the person because there were very few activities for this person to do. This was the turning point to get involved and I decided to do something to prevent this for myself. I told myself to get off my rocking chair and do something like get involved with others.

What are the benefits of peer support? When people talk about their problems, we all have stories to add to this. I believe we can all help each other. I decided in August, 2015 that this is what I was going to do. Because I had been involved with a peer support group in another state, I knew what it took to get it started but I felt I could do it.

Why is it helpful to be connected and involved with others?

I realize it's helpful to be with one another when you're facing challenging situations. By sharing stories it builds confidence in you. You learn that you can do more than you realize.

What has been the best part of being involved with Peer Support? The best part has been seeing some of the people talk about their problems and sharing their concerns. Getting them to socialize with each other. Whenever you do activities like this; you must realize the project is never in vain. There is no failure involved with this. There are benefits for everyone.

Do you have any advice for someone who is interested in peer support but hasn't connected yet with a group? Listen to your doctor and don't think it's the end of the world to be diagnosed with an eye disease. There is always someone that is just like you and many that are worse. You can conquer this. You won't know how much you can do until you try. The more you talk about what is happening to you...the easier it is to face your struggles. Losing your vision is a change of lifestyle but realize there are still things you can do.

Pierre Resident Honored For Lifelong Commitment to Reading

The South Dakota Braille and Talking Book Library honored Enid Hyde of Pierre as South Dakota's first member of the 102 Club. The 102 Club was established by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (a division of the Library of Congress) to honor lifelong readers who are 100 or more years of age.

Enid Hyde, who is 102, has a long affiliation with the South Dakota Braille and Talking Book Library. Her first exposure was when her mother, who had vision problems, signed up to get talking books. "It was a wonderful experience for her," Hyde said. "The staff was always so helpful and genuine."

A familiar face in the South Dakota Braille and Talking Book Library for many years, Hyde volunteered in the recording studios. She recorded many of the books in the cassette collection. She also read newspapers for a live radio program. In later years, she became a patron of the library. Hyde enjoyed books about literature, culture, the social sciences, and travel and geography.

When asked what encouraged her to read, Hyde said that her parents read to her as a child, and when she was four years old, her sister taught her how to read. From that point on, she was unstoppable. Classics like "David Copperfield" by Charles Dickens and L. Frank Baum's Oz books are among her lifelong favorites.

The Braille and Talking Book Library sends an invitation to join the club to any patron who is 100 years old or older. For more information call the South Dakota State Library at 1-800-423-6665.

Medication Management, Health Monitoring, and Fitness Tracking Tools for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

Health Monitoring - Just because you've lost your vision, it doesn't follow that you've also gained an immunity to all those aches, pains, diseases and disorders you had before, or may contract in the future. You still want to stay healthy and fit, and one of AFB's latest guides, [Medication Management, Health Monitoring, and Fitness Tracking Tools for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired](#) can show you how to use technology to do just that.

Medication Management - Have you been struggling to keep your medications apart so you don't accidentally take your blood pressure medicine when you intended to take your antibiotic? Did you know that Walgreens now offers talking prescription labels that can speak the medication name and dosage at the press of a button? If you use a different pharmacy, fear not. Check out the [Accessible Prescription Information and Medication section](#) where we describe two other accessible medication solutions: the ScripTalk Station and AccessaMed, both of which are available free.

Blood Glucose and Blood Pressure Management - Prescription readers are not the only speech-accessible devices that can improve the quality of your life. If you are diabetic, you can check your own glucose levels using a talking glucose monitor. Talking blood pressure monitors, thermometers, kitchen and bathroom scales are also available. Many offer speech output from the device itself; others pair with a mobile device, which you can use to take readings and keep records for yourself or your doctor. Check out [Accessible Mobile Apps and Talking Devices for Health Monitoring](#) to learn more.

Of course the best way to avoid illness is to stay healthy, and thanks to the accessible mobile device revolution, there are a growing number of speech accessible devices and services to help you stay slim and fit. Runkeeper, for example, is a free and accessible mobile app that will keep track of how far and long you walk your average speed and other information that can keep you motivated. My Fitness Pal is another accessible app where you can keep a running food and exercise diary. And that's just the start. Find out about these apps at [Accessible Fitness and Nutrition Tracking Devices and Software](#). By [Bill Holton](#), AccessWorld Correspondent, <http://www.visionaware.org/default.aspx>

Technology Update

The **GuideMe** app is designed for those who have been diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The intent of GuideMe is to simulate as accurately as possible a post-diagnosis consultation with a doctor or therapist. It works by asking a few questions about the user and the user's AMD diagnosis. It then uses the answers to create a customized guide with helpful information, tips, resources and suggested steps to take to be proactive about protecting vision. The guide is compatible with a smart phone, tablet, laptop or PC. The customized guide can be viewed online or downloaded and printed. If there are diagnosis changes and updates, users can return at any time and change their answers to create a new customized guide. The app can be found at <http://lowvision.preventblindness.org/latest-news/new-app-for-amd-patients>

Be My Eyes is an app recommended for the blind and visually impaired community, available for free on the iTunes App Store. As the name implies, using the app allows a sighted person to “be the eyes” for a blind or visually impaired person. Using a live video connection, blind individuals in need of assistance are connected remotely to sighted users. The sighted volunteer receives a notification requesting help, and from the video connection, can help answer whatever question a blind user needs answering, whether the challenge be finding the expiration date on a gallon of milk or describing their surroundings. By establishing a community of blind and sighted users working together, Be My Eyes is helping to create real change in people’s lives. For more information go the Be My Eyes web site at: <http://www.bemyeyes.org/>

South Dakota Facts on Blindness and Low Vision

In 2012, the employment rate of US citizens with vision loss was 36.5 percent. The employment rate for people with vision disabilities was highest in South Dakota (62.2 percent) and lowest in the West Virginia (23.8 percent). From the 2014 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium at:

<http://disabilitycompendium.org/archives/2014-compendium-statistics>

Prevalence Rates of Visual Loss in South Dakota - The term vision loss refers to individuals who reported they have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses or contact lenses, as well as those who are blind or unable to see at all.

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|---------------------|--------|
| Total | 20,708 |
| Gender | |
| Male | 9,883 |
| Female | 10,825 |
| Age | |
| Under 5 | 310 |
| 5-17 | 868 |
| 18-34 | 2,942 |
| 35-64 | 9,070 |
| 65-74 | 2,076 |
| 75 and older | 5,442 |

*Updated January 2015, American Foundation for the Blind:

<http://www.afb.org/info/blindness-statistics/state-specific-statistical-information/south-dakota/235>

Announcements

- Disability Day at the Capital February 10, 2016
 - Board of SBVI Meeting – February 26th, Ft. Pierre
 - State Independent Living Council Meeting – March 2nd, Ft. Pierre
 - SBVI Public Forum – April 29, Rapid City
 - NFB of South Dakota State Convention – April 29-30, Rapid City
 - Youth Leadership Forum – June 5-9, 2016, Aberdeen
 - Transition Week at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind – June 26-30, Sioux Falls
 - SD Association of the Blind Convention – September 9th -11th, Aberdeen
 - Fall Conference October 18 – 20, Deadwood
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To request alternative formats or for other information contact us toll free at:
1-800-265-9684 or (605) 773-4644

Visit our web site at: <http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/>